

## Parma Wallaby (*Macropus parma*)

**Habitat and Distribution:** Found in rainforests or wet forests with a dense understory in the Great Dividing Range of Southern New Wales in Australia. There is also a surviving feral population (due to introduction) in Kauwau Island near Auckland, New Zealand.

**Size:** Body is 1½ -2 feet long. Tail is about equal to body length. They weigh about 11 pounds.

**Wild Diet:** Browse on low vegetation and graze on grasses.

**Predators:** Foxes and ferral cats

**Life Span:** 9 years (wild life span)

**Reproduction:** These wallabies are sexually mature 11½ -16 months of age. After only a month- long gestation period, the mother gives birth to a tiny helpless joey that crawls into her pouch. This is where the young will grow and develop for 8 months. The joey will slowly emerge and spend more and more time outside the pouch.

**Behavior:** Parma wallabies are shy and cryptic creatures that are active at night. They shelter in thick scrub during the day and emerge at dusk to feed. These wallabies are mostly solitary, however 2-3 animals may eat near each other in favorable conditions. Males spend more time actively foraging than do the females. They have specialized teeth that help in the grinding up of the fibrous plants that they eat. They are able to travel very long distances at quick speeds due to their specialized hind legs.

**Conservation Connection:** Parma wallabies were thought to be extinct before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were “rediscovered” in the 1960s on Kauwau Island. They are listed by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals as “lower risk/near threatened”. At this listing, they are close to qualifying for Vulnerable status, which means that they are not currently Critically Endangered or Endangered but are facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future. Hunting and habitat loss are their major threats.

**Interesting Facts:** Generally, wallabies are smaller and stockier than kangaroos, but there is no specific dividing line. Males are slightly larger and more muscular than females. The parma wallaby is the smallest member of the genus *Macropus*. They have rather large hind legs and a powerful muscled tail. Their front legs are small feet having 5 separate digits. They are able to store “strain energy” in their tendons, which enable them to bounce up with minimal muscular effort.

